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SUBJECT: AU DONOR SUPPORT GROUP PLANS NOVEMBER 2009 MEETING

1. (U) This Message contains an action request in para 9.

2. (U) Summary: Members of the AUC, UNECA and donor countries met on September 17 to discuss an up-coming Donor Support Group meeting scheduled for the week of November 30. The meeting will give high-level policymakers from donor countries a chance to hear from AUC and UNECA leaders on their plans and priorities. Armed with this information, the group will discuss how donors can best support a cohesive, AUC/UNECA-driven program that promotes African priorities. Meeting organizers are eager to know who will participate from Washington. End Summary.

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HIGH-LEVEL MEETING PLANNED  
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3. (U) On September 17, about 14 donor country representatives gathered to discuss preparations for a Donor Support Group consultative meeting in Addis Ababa the week of November 30. Anthony Okara, Deputy Chief of Staff for the Deputy Chairperson to the African Union Commission (AUC), chaired the meeting. Viewed as an opportunity for high-level policymakers to engage with leaders from the AUC and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the November meeting is intended to give donors insight into AUC and UNECA objectives, and to enable them to coordinate support.

4. (U) The June 2009 Diplomatic Note that proposed the establishment of a donor support group stated that, "Membership of the group will be based on commitment to a minimum specified level of support to the AU Strategic Plan and/or the ECA Business Plan." However, the amount of such a commitment has yet to be agreed upon. According to Mike McCarthy of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the U.S. "is a really important donor, even if they only give a dollar." The threshold of support will be discussed at the November 2009 meeting.

5. (U) Donors and the AUC and UNECA leadership hope to achieve several goals through this first Donor Support Group meeting. To start, AUC Chairperson Jean Ping and UNECA Executive Secretary Abdoulie Jannet want to explain to donors their agenda and the AUC/ECA relationship. By clarifying their strategies, priorities and management process, the AUC aims to get donors to buy into a cohesive program that promotes African priorities, rather than a piecemeal approach that reflects donor will. The hope is that donor countries can channel their support more constructively and with less duplication of effort once they have a clear understanding of AUC/UNECA objectives. Ideally, the AUC would like donors to move toward unearmarked, predictable budget support so that organization heads can align a set budget with agreed-upon priorities.

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PROPOSED AGENDA  
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16. (U) Following is the proposed agenda for the Donor Support Group meeting. AUC Deputy Chairperson Erastus Mwencha confirmed that he is available the week of November 30. Debate centered on whether the meeting should be two, three or four days long. Tentatively, day one will take place at the African Union and day two at ECA with a third day reserved for wrap-up.

- (1) Discussion of the AU Strategic Plan (approved, abridged version in preparation)
- (2) Discussion of the ECA Business Plan (currently in review)
- (3) Strengthening of AUC and ECA collaboration
- (4) Functioning of the Donor Support Group
- (5) Donor Support Group funding modalities

17. (U) The Donor Support Group also discussed the expected outcome of the November meeting. Possible concrete deliverables included an agreed-upon framework, a signed agreement and a roadmap with benchmarks.

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WASHINGTON PARTICIPATION  
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18. (U) Two questions arose regarding participation from capitals during the meeting. First, the DFID representative, who coordinates Donor Support Group planning meetings, wanted to know whether the USG has responded to the Note Verbale on this topic. On behalf of the USG, USAU conveyed its support on July 10, 2009 for the establishment of a Donor Support Group that will meet annually.

19. (U) ACTION REQUEST: Second, organizers would like to have an idea of who from headquarters will attend, as well as the name of a working-level contact in Washington with whom to coordinate prior to the November meeting. Most missions plan to send Africa-division directors general or deputy directors. Some will send director-level personnel from their development arms. Please advise USAU of expected USG representation. USAU Ambassador Battle will attend from Addis Ababa.

MEECE